

# NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

## Darvin Ham

Los Angeles Lakers

Game 1: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 132, Los Angeles Lakers 126

**Q. As some of the matchups switched around in the second half, you kept Rui out there more, defending Jokic. When did you decide to go to that adjustment and how much do you think it keyed the come back?**

DARVIN HAM: Well, just, you know, pivoting within the game, making a slight adjustment. Wanted to take A [Anthony Davis] off as being the initial line of defense and hopefully Rui could turn him, make him go east-west a little bit more. And once he went up to shoot, he shoots 70 percent on those floaters, those short-range chip shots and floaters and hooks and little one-leg fadeaways. He shoots them at an amazing rate, scores them, I should say.

So just the idea was just to get A behind him a little bit and have A as that big, long arm just ready to contest over the top of Rui. It was good for us in some segments, and we were able after the tough first half, giving up 72 points, and claw our way back into it. The closest we got was three.

Hats off to them. They came out. They defended their home floor, a lot, a lot of long rebounds and we gave them way too many second-chance points, offensive-rebounding opportunities and 50/50 balls for that matter. We've got to be better in transition, and we can't foul them. We've got to be more disciplined showing our hands when we are guarding the ball and guarding those guys around the rim and in the post and whatnot.

**Q. They were almost 50 percent from the three-point range tonight. Is that something you have to get out there more or more cutting off the passing lanes?**

DARVIN HAM: It's a little bit of everything. It's a talented team. It's very few one-trick ponies that make it this far. They are able to put pressure on you in the paint, pressure on you from the three-point line, very capable shooters, some of which are elite, and you know, you've just got to be ready to give multiple efforts. As I mentioned before the game, doing your work early, being in position when the



defensive possession starts. That way we are not playing catch-up.

So we'll go back and look at the film tonight and see what we need to clean up, take a good look at that second half and see what went well, try to sustain the good stuff, and alleviate and repair the bad stuff.

**Q. You guys started Dennis, I think they ended up with, I think, offensive rebounds on nine of their 11 missed shots, how did their size, especially against your small lineup affect the game early? Will you reevaluate those five?**

DARVIN HAM: My first inclination, it's not even a size factor. It's a mobility factor. Meaning, like bodies, we had guys, multiple bodies just standing around. No one is seeking out a hit. No one is, you know, one person getting a hit, one person selling out, going after the basketball. A couple of times, the ball just dropped to the ground and someone swooped in from their team and grabbed it.

You know, at first glance, just coming off the game without having watched it again, that's what I feel like was happening. Too many possessions where we had bodies in the vicinity of the rebound but just never put a body on their body or went, just made a deliberate attempt to go grab the ball.

**Q. Talking about the defensive adjustments you made on Jokic with Rui guarding him.**

DARVIN HAM: Well, I mean, again, it's not any one coverage that you're going to be able to stay in versus that kid. There's no one person that's going to stop him. It has to be done by committee and you have to switch up. You have to switch up matchups at times and you have to switch up coverages. We didn't want to go too deep into the end-game adjustments. You know, it's still that ultimate chess game.

So we were comfortable with the results. Gave us a chance to get back into the game, and you know, it's one of the things we know if we need to go back to it, it's there. But along with several other things that we didn't unveil tonight.

**Q. Asking about LeBron, the pick-and-roll, targeting**

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**guys, we saw that a lot in the fourth quarter comeback. Is that something you guys feel that you can do even more in Game 2? What did you see with the way LeBron was able to get downhill and draw fouls?**

DARVIN HAM: Absolutely it has to be a part of it and our plan of attack, and you know, having said that, Murray was in foul trouble, and so he was the obvious target we tried to go at.

Just in general terms, you want to make him and Jokic work on this side of the ball, Michael Porter Jr. and these guys. You want to try to make them work. Their offensive firepower is at such a level to where, you know, if they are only playing on that side of the ball, they are not having to exert any energy defensively, then the more energy they have, just to snipe you down when they have the ball in their hand on the other side.

And all the while trying to stay within rhythm. We don't want to start playing up against the shot clock because we are taking all day to get a particular matchup or get a guy into the action.

The thing that has to happen, if they are pre switching or doing something like that, we have to keep the ball and the bodies moving until we do find it. If we do find something good without them being in the action, we have to be ready to take that, too.

**Q. You just mentioned not wanting to play too long into the shot clock, is that your mentality looking at the LeBron three above the break, you're down three with 40-some seconds to go, there's time on the shot clock, but is that the mentality there?**

DARVIN HAM: Took a shot that he's made I don't know how many times. We are talking about the all-time leading scorer in NBA history. I have confidence in him. It always can be argued, okay, is this the right shot to take now, but if he hits it, we're not having this discussion.

So I want all my players to be confident and he is definitely confident at the top of that list and I trust his feel. There's times we wanted him to take certain shots and he didn't take them, and we find something better on the back side or underneath, if they are trying to force him a certain direction or double-team him late or whatever. He definitely has my trust in all of those regards.

But you know, just in general, I thought we slowed down a little bit, we were slowing a little bit in the first half. Like we got to come out running after makes and misses, pushing the pace right back at them. I thought they did an incredible job of doing that on their own on behalf of, like,

makes, misses. Jokic can get it and go. Basically everybody in their starting lineup can get a defensive rebound and start the break. We have a team built of guys who have those capabilities, as well, and we have got to definitely execute them next time out.

**Q. You guys haven't been in this position this postseason down 0-1. Were you optimistic with enough of what you saw in the second half when it comes to limiting them more defensively and things you found offensively? Did you see enough to leave this game to feel relatively good despite the loss?**

DARVIN HAM: Yeah, we woke up and we started digging in and playing with a little more urgency. There's no doubt in my mind when we come out for Game 2, we'll be ready. We'll go back and do what we need to do for our team physically. Start the recovery process now. Break down the film. Watch what we need to watch. Thank God it's the best of seven and it's not the NCAA Tournament, you know. It's the first to four. We'll be okay, trust me.

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